

1. The Academy of Medical Sciences welcomes the opportunity to comment on the treatment of independent scientific advice by government. The Academy's core mission is to promote advances in medical science and to ensure these are translated as quickly as possible into benefits for society. This mission incorporates many of the issues considered in the Select Committee's call for views: the need for public policy-makers to use the best available scientific evidence; the role of scientists in advising Government; the independent nature of scientific advice; and the methods by which Government incorporates evidence into policy. Our 944 Fellows represent the UK's best medical researchers, drawn from hospitals, academia, industry and the public sector. They make valuable contributions to connecting science, government, policy and society, both as individuals and as contributors to the Academy's own policy activities.
2. We note the consultations by Professor John Beddington CMG FRS and by Lord Drayson on the same topic and hope that the Select Committee's deliberations will contribute to these; there is value in a co-ordinated approach to this topic.
3. To source and make use of scientific evidence most effectively, Government must actively seek and encourage authoritative, independent scientific advice at the earliest stages of policy development. While scientific evidence is not necessarily the only factor that must be considered when making policy, scientists do have a vital role to play in providing and interpreting evidence.
4. There is now an increasing expectation upon scientists that they will take their work into public forums, as demonstrated by the inclusion of these activities in the 'Impact' criteria of the Higher Education Funding Council for England's recent Research Excellence Framework proposals for assessing the quality of UK academic research. It is vital that scientists do not feel that a government advisory role will compromise their freedom to continue active research and to communicate their work.
5. We are supportive of the underlying messages of the proposed principles, namely that: the academic freedom of scientists who provide advice to government should be safeguarded; the advice scientists give should be protected from political or other interference in their work; and that increased clarity and transparency in the processes behind Government's consideration of scientific advice is required. However, we think the principles would have benefited from defining the expected conduct of both scientists *and* Government in developing well-informed policy; this could in turn contribute towards building trust and demonstrating the two way relationship between Government and scientists. The National Academies¹ could play

¹ The Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society.

a more active and formal role in training and guidance for scientists (and Government officials) in developing evidence-based policy.

6. In appointing members to Government scientific advisory bodies, Departmental Ministers are consulted for approval of Chairs and members, but the process may benefit further from giving the Minister of State for Science a more primary role in making these appointments, particularly for committee Chairs. Identifying appropriate experts to serve on advisory committees is also an area where advice from Academies could be sought, while respecting the Nolan recommendations that guide such appointments. The lists of nominating organisations for all Advisory Committees should be reviewed to ensure that relevant organisations, such as the Academies, are given the opportunity to identify appropriate applicants.
7. The proposed principles refer specifically to independent advisory committees and, as the Select Committee is aware, Government also gets its scientific advice from other sources. As the Select Committee has highlighted over the years, there is an opportunity for Government to benefit more fully from the expertise, authority and independence of the National Academies, whose Fellows represent the elite of UK science and scholarship and are a national resource of expert advice. Particular strengths of the Academies, on which the Government can draw, include obtaining consensus views, particularly in scientific areas that are complex, emerging or not supported by large amounts of data.
8. Much progress has been made in embedding independent scientific advice into policy and we hope that the current debate does not discourage either scientists or policymakers from making further progress.

The Academy of Medical Sciences

The Academy of Medical Sciences promotes advances in medical science and campaigns to ensure these are converted into healthcare benefits for society. Our Fellows are the UK's leading medical scientists from hospitals and general practice, academia, industry and the public service.

The Academy seeks to play a pivotal role in determining the future of medical science in the UK, and the benefits that society will enjoy in years to come. We champion the UK's strengths in medical science, promote careers and capacity building, encourage the implementation of new ideas and solutions – often through novel partnerships – and help to remove barriers to progress.

The Academy's Officers are:

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